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Well," "The Samaritan Passover," and "Lessons of the Wilderness." The discussions abound in quotations from the Old Testament and the New, brought in just where the point under survey helps illumine the passage. The footnotes give the reader the book, chapter, and verse, and an index of Scripture references at the end of the volume locates all the passages illustrated or illumined by the customs narrated. A Topical Index also makes the volume a valuable reference work for any student of the Old Testament. Dr. Trumbull has put the matter in a charming literary form, and made it entertaining, interesting, and instructive. The general and special Bible student will receive from its presentations many new hints as to the better interpretation of such portions of Scripture as grow immediately out of the customs of the times. The mechanical make-up of the volume is elegant, too luxurious for the ordinary book buyer. An edition in slightly smaller type, narrower margins, lighter paper, lower price, would not depreciate its real value as compared with works of like character, and would add vastly to its salableness among the very class of men which Dr. Trumbull can most help. We hope that such an edition will soon be issued.

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PRICE.

**The Distinctive Messages of the Old Religions.** By the REV. GEORGE MATHESON, M.A., D.D. New York: A. D. F. Randolph & Co., 1892. Pp. vii. and 342.

This is a very attractive book by reason of the subject and the vigor and variety of the presentation. Dr. Matheson is never dull, always stimulating, often instructive. The variety of fields into which he has entered in his various writings suggests a natural suspicion of superficiality in the treatment, which indeed is not always unjustified, though the brilliance of the style, joined with the ingenuity and originality of the ideas advanced, succeed partially in doing away with such an impression. This latest work in the study of religions is marked by all the characteristics of the writer's method. We cannot feel that he has scored an unqualified success. His very excellences tell against him. The field of religious history demands careful and patient study of the phenomena, and a multitude of qualifications and reservations in the handling, such as in the nature of the case Dr. Matheson cannot give. The presentation of the salient thought, the "distinctive message," of each religion, if, indeed, such a thing can be determined—the primary object of this work—must lie at the end of such prolonged and patient study, not, as is thought by the writer, in a line somewhat apart from, and less uncertain and obscure than, the detailed investigation of the multitudinous facts of each faith.

Moreover, is it an indubitable fact that each of the world's great religions had one "distinctive message" which is to be singled out and labeled in this manner? These great religions grappled with all the problems of existence,

and contributed light upon the various questions which man seeks to answer. Their "messages" are complex, not simple. At least it seems to us to be an assumption which cannot be taken for granted, that these religions each had a different thought, a different direction, a different outcome, clearly and strongly marked and capable of reduction to a formula. A book, therefore, which bases itself on the assumption, is doomed to partial failure from the beginning. Its service will consist, and the service of Dr. Matheson's book consists, in the delineation of some characteristic features and the presentation of important elements in these religions. These chapters cannot fail to stimulate interest in their study, and contribute some very attractive pages to the literature of exposition of religious thinking and life outside of Christianity.

When the book is tested in its salient points, it does not always come off with success. We do not refer so much to the two opening chapters of discussion respecting the origin and essential character of religion, though these seem to us more showy than solid. But the "distinctive messages" discovered will not be accepted by most students of religion as valid. The inductions are built upon a few facts and are colored by the subjective ideas of the writer. All the conclusions of Dr. Matheson might be met with counter assertions which could be bolstered up with facts equally evident and equally conclusive.

All students in religion, and all work in this field should be welcomed. Everything that stimulates interest is thereby commendable. But it is necessary to warn the uninitiated that not all the facts are settled, and that conclusions as to "distinctive messages" are very hazardous. If Dr. Matheson had concentrated on one religion the work he has spread over ten, he would have produced a better book, and have done a more permanent service to the study of religions.

G. S. G.

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**Hours with the Mystics:** A Contribution to the History of Religious Opinion.

By ROBERT ALFRED VAUGHAN, B.A. Sixth edition. Two volumes in one. Imported by Charles Scribner's Sons, 1893. Pp. xxxix., 372; x., 382.

The appearance of a new reprint—it is nothing more—of the third edition of this work, is a tribute to the hold it has upon the heart of the religious and scholarly publics. By no means a compend of all philosophy that might be termed mystical, it has thrown together the chief thoughts of the chief mystics in such simple, sympathetic fashion, that to miss reading it, is to miss the most effective introduction to that fascinating world that lies on the borderland between poetry and fact. For nearly forty years this work has held its own unique place in literature. Special studies on Bernard of Clairvaux, St. Francis, Tauler, Madam Guyon, and other mystical writers, have never replaced the discussions and letters of Atherton and his friends. Its reappearance in these days is encouraging in that it evinces an undercurrent of sympathy with the deep spiritual life of all ages. The present is